

threats of violence and references to intimidation of school officials.

But you have to ask: What counts as intimidation to the Attorney General? Is an angry, frustrated parent raising their voice at a school board meeting intimidation?

I think not.

What if one of the parents tells a school board member they plan to run against them in the next election or donate to their opponent in the next election; is that intimidation?

Well, to his credit, the Attorney General did finally concede that parents' right to speak their minds at school board meetings are protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It is their constitutional right.

But I ask you, put yourself in the shoes of a parent who reads about this Department of Justice memo—from the Attorney General, no less—at the kitchen table.

Is it going to have an impact on their decision to attend the next school board meeting? Will it cause them to shy away from advocating for their children's education and speaking up about misguided policies that they think have no place in their child's school?

I ask you to consider the chilling effect that this had, and will continue to have, on parents who just want to have a say in their children's education.

Instead of raising their voices in opposition to things like critical race theory or other radical educational policies, parents are more likely to be intimidated and to stay at home for fear of being labeled domestic terrorists by the highest law enforcement officer in the land.

They certainly can't afford to hire a lawyer to defend themselves against these sorts of charges by the Federal Government, were the Federal Government to come after them for exercising what Attorney General Garland said were their First Amendment rights under the Constitution.

In response to the Attorney General's memo, the U.S. attorney from Montana sent out a list of Federal statutes that could serve as a basis for prosecution. He took the Attorney General at his word. Among the Federal statutes that he thought could serve as a basis for prosecution included repeated telephone calls.

Well, last week, I asked the Attorney General if he considered the chilling effect that his memo might have on parents exercising their constitutional rights. He evaded the question. So I asked him again. His answers became more evasive. So I asked him again.

Ultimately, the Attorney General—although he was sworn in under oath, testifying in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee—refused to answer the question. He wouldn't tell me, wouldn't tell the Judiciary Committee, wouldn't tell the country, whether he had put any thought at all into how his actions would impact concerned, law-abiding parents.

Even though the National School Boards Association retracted and apologized for its letter, the Justice Department—the Biden Justice Department—still refuses to do so. Attorney General Garland has doubled down on this colossal overreach and still refuses to take ownership or consider how his swift and uninformed action has harmed public discourse in our country.

But, clearly, it is not only where we are headed, because we are already there. The President and the leaders in his administration aren't making decisions on the basis of the law of the land, but based on demands of their radical left.

Amid an alarming spike in murder and violent crime rates, the Justice Department is focused on the threat of concerned parents, because that is what the radical left wants.

The Department is filing meritless lawsuits against State election laws, like those in Georgia and Texas, because that is what their radical base wants.

The Secretary of Homeland Security has told Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers not to enforce our Nation's immigration laws, because that is what the radical left and the Democratic Party want.

President Biden has signaled that he is not only OK with this kind of selective law enforcement, he actually wants more of it.

One of the most controversial nominees being considered by the Senate right now is Rachael Rollins, who the President has nominated to serve as the U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts. Ms. Rollins currently serves as a district attorney for Suffolk County, MA, where she is embroiled in her own controversy.

Shortly after taking office in 2019, Ms. Rollins released a memo outlining more than a dozen crimes that she said should be ignored by local law enforcement. According to Ms. Rollins, individuals who commit offenses like trespassing, shoplifting, larceny, wanton or malicious destruction of property, and even possession with intent to distribute drugs, she said her office would not prosecute them, so law enforcement should not arrest them.

Now, I have no issue with law enforcement using limited resources to prioritize the biggest threats, but there is a big difference between prioritizing dangerous criminals and offenses and exempting wholesale classes of crimes from enforcement.

What happens when the message is sent that government will not enforce its laws? As being played out in California now, where many businesses are simply withdrawing from places like San Francisco, where, if you steal or shoplift something under \$950 worth of merchandise, law enforcement will not arrest you; they will not prosecute; and thus the stores are left without recourse and, as you can imagine, thievery runs riot.

Well, leaders certainly shouldn't tip their hat to criminals as to what crimes may be committed free of any consequences, and that is exactly what is happening. The Justice Department's priorities are completely out of whack, and radical, partisan U.S. attorneys will only make things worse.

The Biden administration cannot continue to take their marching orders from the radical base of their political party. And the United States should never be a place where concerned parents are treated like criminals and actual criminals get a free pass.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

VACCINES

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I am beginning to feel a little bit like a broken record when I am here on the floor and talking about all the ways that Tennesseans feel like this administration has backed them into a corner.

It doesn't matter if I am going to fill up the car with that rising price in gas, or if I am at the grocery store and could not believe this weekend there is so little on the shelves and they are so short-staffed.

People are very anxious about this. I had a lady that just about was not going to let me go there in the dairy section of the grocery store because she was really upset with what this administration is doing. Whether it is inflation or the vaccine mandate, she is really upset with what she would like to call the "White House P.R. operation." And she knows that inflation and supply chain problems are here. It is not temporary. It wasn't transient. It is something that they are dealing with every day, and Tennesseans are seeing this at every stop along their busy days.

They have watched this administration abandon the southern border. You know, they don't use that term lightly, but I think it is instructive to focus in on that. This administration has abandoned the southern border.

These actions are intentional actions—intentional. Whether you talk to Border Patrol or the local sheriff, they look at what Democrats in Washington are doing, and they see this as being intentional.

They also look at how this administration chose to abandon a productive energy policy. In January, we were an exporter—an exporter—of energy. And, today, we have a President—a very weak President—who is groveling to OPEC, begging them—begging them—to sell us more fuel. What a difference. What a difference.

And this administration—when I was up in Clarksville where Fort Campbell is located, I was out on post, and I was visiting with Tennesseans there in Clarksville. They feel as if this administration has abandoned our troops, abandoned civilians and allies in Afghanistan as we handed over 20 years' worth of hard-fought territory to the

new “axis of evil,” which is Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea—abandoned, left, forgotten about. Over the past few weeks, they have learned that even their recreational social media use might be putting their families at risk.

Meanwhile, things here on Capitol Hill are such a mess that, from their perspective, it is neither reasonable nor rational to believe that the Democratic majority is willing to put country before party and politics and fix this mess that this administration has made this year. In fact, the Democrats are so focused on their own Big Government narrative that they have managed to outdo themselves with the mandate from on high that goes further than ever before to control deeply personal healthcare decisions.

Of course, the Democrats are no stranger to this. They championed the Affordable Care Act and all its bureaucracy, but this time, they have truly put the full force of the executive branch of the U.S. Government between a patient and a doctor. That is right. The decision is not one you will make with your doctor; it is one that the Federal Government is making and forcing—forcing—on you. This COVID-19 vaccine mandate has people really upset. They see this as a power play.

Today, I talked to a lady who works for a government contractor. All of the family’s insurance and benefits come through her. Her husband is a small business person, and she has a child with disabilities. She begged me to keep fighting against this mandate.

She said: You know, I am in the position that I had to get this—even though a family member of hers had a terrible adverse reaction, and she was concerned being the primary breadwinner for her family and the one that provides their healthcare insurance benefits. And she had a reaction, a bad reaction.

But she feels like what we are seeing is another opportunistic power play that betrays the very people who risked their safety to prevent the economy from collapsing during the pandemic—that is right, the essential workers, people who showed up and did their job.

The lady I talked to today was an essential worker. She did her job all through the pandemic. The States deemed these individuals essential workers because they showed up. They spent their days transporting food and clothing across the country, stocking shelves in grocery stores, and keeping armed rioters at bay.

They never stopped working. They never missed a beat. They put themselves in danger and adapted to circumstances made worse by forced lockdowns. These are the people who couldn’t have worked from home if they wanted to. They are the cop on the beat. They are the truck driver who is in the cab of that truck. They are the healthcare worker standing at a bedside. They are an airline worker

who is making certain that people are safe and planes are safe to fly.

And, now, they are the ones that Joe Biden, KAMALA HARRIS, and this administration have chosen to threaten with an executive ultimatum: Get the shot, or we are going to get you fired.

That is right. Imagine that. The President of the United States says: You go get the jab, or I am going to get you fired from your job—what an ultimatum, what a way to run a country.

But that is what he is doing. The White House crossed so many lines with this one: practical lines, ethical lines, constitutional lines. So last week, I introduced the Keeping Our COVID-19 Heroes Employed Act to push this administration back on the rails and protect these essential workers from having to choose between submitting to the mandate or losing the right to provide for their families.

It is a simple solution to a very big problem. It would lock in the definitions of essential worker used by the States during the pandemic and then protect those workers from being fired under COVID vaccine requirements. It would nullify the Executive orders mandating vaccines for essential Federal workers and contractors and preempt OSHA from issuing regulations that would require employees to vaccinate if those employees qualify as an essential worker.

We are getting a tremendous amount of support for this legislation. On the national level, we have heard from the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriffs’ Association, the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the National Border Patrol Council, and from the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce, Tennessee Ambulance Service Association, Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, the National Association of Small Trucking Companies, and then from several individual officials—Democrat and Republican alike—and from different organizations.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent this list be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

KEEPING OUR COVID-19 HEROES EMPLOYED  
ACT LIST OF ENDORSEMENTS  
NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

—Fraternal Order of Police  
—National Sheriffs’ Association  
—Chicago Fraternal Order of Police  
—Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association  
—National Border Patrol Council  
INDUSTRY ADVOCACY  
—Tennessee Chamber of Commerce  
—Tennessee Ambulance Service Association  
—Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA)  
—National Association of Small Trucking Companies

TENNESSEE OFFICIALS

—Congressman Tim Burchett (R-Tenn.)  
—Glenn Jacobs, Mayor of Knox County Tennessee

—Justin Hanson, Mayor of Covington, Tennessee

—Sheriff Russell Barker, Anderson County Tennessee

—Sheriff Tim Fuller, Franklin County Tennessee

—Sheriff Tom Spangler, Knox County Tennessee

ACTIVIST ORGANIZATIONS

—Texas Public Policy Foundation  
—Heritage Foundation  
—FreedomWorks  
—American Principles Project

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, see, these are individuals on the front line, and they take exception to what is going on with this administration and this Executive order that is forcing them to get a shot that maybe their doctor is saying: Hey, this is not one for you to take.

Maybe they are a young woman trying to have a baby. Maybe they are somebody who has a history of heart disease or lung disease or neuromuscular issues in their family and someone has had an adverse reaction.

You know what? People are smart. They are going to figure this out and figure out what works best for them. During the pandemic, the essential workers figured this out, and they ought to be exempt.

The Biden administration claims that this mandate is the ticket to freedom, return to normal. But here is the problem with this and why that falls on deaf ears. These essential workers returned to normal months ago—if they ever left a normal routine—and their working conditions have been made more difficult now than ever.

Businesses are desperate for workers. In August, the U.S. economy had 10.4 million jobs waiting to be filled. That is right, 10.4 million jobs. We are going to get unemployment numbers this weekend on Friday. I think it is going to be interesting to see what those numbers tell us.

Oh, the supply chain—I mentioned the grocery store and what I found there. Well, the supply chains are a mess. We need 80,000 truck drivers right now—today—if we want to make an honest attempt at filling the need there to get products to stores. We can’t afford the toll these mandates are taking on the supply chain workforce or on law enforcement or border security or the healthcare sector or the airline industry, the transportation and logistics industry.

And make no mistake, the day of reckoning is already here. As I said, these workers have figured this out. They are smart. They don’t hate the country. And it is ridiculous that some people try to equate those that don’t get the vaccine with hating the country. These individuals are not antivaxxers. They are not anti-science. What they are is this: They are unconstitutional mandate and a government overreach that is going to interfere in their relationship with their doctor. That is what they are against.

Mr. President, don’t we all remember the lie of the decade in 2010 with

ObamaCare: If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor.

And what we are looking at right now is something that is an equal overreach: You can't keep your job if you won't get this jab. It is an overreach.

People that I am talking to are really anti these mandates that would force them into submission or, in some cases, into poverty, like the young mom that I talked to who works for a government contractor—sole supporter of her family at this point, has one child, wants to have another child, and because of this mandate, she is going to lose her job, a job she loves—and her employer loves her. But she is wanting to make certain she can have that second child.

These workers are very pro-freedom, and they are taking a stand on principle. They are pro-freedom. They are pro-individual rights, and what they want is for this administration to stop it, to stop their push to this socialist agenda, stop trying to force them into taking a vaccine, which is another step to having government control of their healthcare.

You know, they look at what the Democrats in Washington, DC, are doing, and they see that they are trying to take one vote. They want to win. They want to win on putting everything together—one vote—and then flipping the country to their socialist agenda—one vote: government control of your kids, of your healthcare, of your bank account, of your life, cradle to grave, daylight to dark, sunup to sundown, 24/7, 365.

You know, I have to tell you, we thought that when the Obama campaign came out with their little caricatures and cartoon-type character—only it was really frightening—“The Life of Julia,” we thought, this is ridiculous how Julia never needed anybody or anything but the Federal Government.

Well, some of that same crowd in the White House has now come up with “The Life of Linda,” and Linda must be related to Julia because Linda has the same type life experiences as Julia. There is no mention of a family or a husband, but Linda has a child. Linda works for the government. The government is in control.

See, that is what the Democratic Party wants—socialism. They are very happy with that—cradle to grave; daylight to dark; total control; tell you what to do; tell you what your job is going to be; tell you what you are going to study in school; take control of your children; send them to study whatever they want; and then have them work in a way that the government tells them they are going to work.

But what we are seeing play out in this country is the American people standing up and saying: Enough is enough. We don't want your mandate. We are tired of all of your chaotic cycle of gaslighting and government overreach. We are pushing back on your push to a socialist agenda.

I am heartened that they are not afraid to say “no, no, no” to what the Democrats are trying to push, and they are going to continue to push back because they see what is happening for what it is—a destructive, radical agenda that will destroy freedom of choice, free people, free markets, and opportunity for their children and future generations.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING JOHN AMARA F. WALTERS

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I think all Senators can agree that we would not be able to deliver results for the people in our States and for our country if it were not for our extraordinary staff, who work with us each and every day. They are there with us in the trenches, fighting for the constituents we pledge to serve, and defending the Constitution of the United States.

It is for that reason that I am confident my colleagues will agree with me when I say congressional staff is more than just a collection of individuals; it is a family. And it is that truth that makes my presence on the Senate floor this evening all the more difficult, because my office, our family, has lost a beloved member.

John Amara F. Walters, a legislative aide in my office, passed away on the morning of October 2, at MedStar Washington Hospital Center in Washington, DC. He died in the arms of his beloved mother, Kimberley, who joins us this evening in the gallery. John was 29 years old.

On behalf of myself, our office, and the people of Maryland, I want to take a little time not only to express our profound grief at the loss of a dear friend and amazing human being, but also to tell a little bit of John's story to this Senate and to the Nation, and to pay tribute to his life, to honor all that he gave us, and to celebrate all that he gave to the world.

John Amara F. Walters was born on Friday, February 9, 1992, in Adrian, MI, to John A.M. Walters and Kimberley H. Davis Walters. He came from a long line of patriots and leaders, including his grandfather, who defended the United States in World War II as a Tuskegee Airman.

And John caught the political bug early. At age 6—yes, you all heard that right, aged 6 years old—John started working on local political campaigns. In his early years, he participated in three Presidential elections and traveled across Michigan and the country to serve communities in need. In high school, he interned for the late great Michigan Senator, Carl Levin. John

was also a committed member of the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute's Pathways to Freedom program.

He excelled inside the classroom—first graduating from Adrian High School in 2010, and then going on to study at the District of Columbia's own Howard University, where he earned his BA in psychology in 2015 magna cum laude. I should add he was a loyal Howard alum and proud Bison and a favorite son of the university's.

The last time I met face-to-face—in the pre-COVID days—with the president of Howard University, Wayne Frederick, John was with me, and I told Dr. Frederick how proud we were of John's exemplary work, and Dr. Frederick was proud too.

John did all of this at a young age and more, and he achieved these things despite having a lifelong battle with sickle cell anemia—an illness that often struck him with fatigue and pain. But that didn't stop John. He refused to be defined by his illness, and he refused to allow sickle cell to prevent him from pursuing his dreams with passion and decency and dedication. It is a disease that took him from us far too soon, but it never took away his spirit or his zest for life and his commitment to making a positive change.

I will always remember John for the twinkle in his eye, his enthusiasm for everything he did, his absolute brilliance, and his commitment to helping others. Everyone in our office—and I mean everyone—loved John.

After he passed away, we held a staff Zoom call with his mother, both to grieve together and to remember John; and in that gathering, we witnessed a torrent of love and affection for all John did and what he meant to us. There were lots of tears, but also many moments of beautiful laughter, as we recounted many fun stories about John.

He gave us many things, but perhaps one of his greatest gifts was his empathy. In the world of politics and Capitol Hill, there is plenty of ambition. And John was ambitious. But empathy is often in short supply. Not in John.

Empathy is that quality where someone seeks to see the world through the eyes of another, of understanding what somebody else is experiencing by trying to walk in that person's shoes and live the world as they live it. John did not just hear the words spoken by others; he listened; he absorbed them; he dared to be vulnerable.

And what always struck me about John was his capacity to focus on the struggles experienced by others at the same time he was carrying on his own fight against sickle cell. Perhaps his own personal struggle made him far more attuned to the hardships faced by others; but whatever its source, John's capacity to care inspired us all, as did his ability to persist and carry on in the face of adversity. John embodied the very best of us.

John first joined my office as an intern right out of college, when I was